



Seven Key Questions about the Delta Conveyance

All signs seem to suggest that the State intends to allow the construction of world-record size tunnels or pipes capable of diverting 15,000 cubic feet per second from the Sacramento River – nearly all of its average freshwater flow. Diversion of such a large quantity of water would have devastating impacts to fish and wildlife and water quality in the Delta. Estimates of the project's costs are anywhere from \$20 billion to \$50 billion.

While the State is preparing to move forward with this project, many details remain unavailable to the public about it. Before California gives the green light to build a peripheral canal or tunnels around the Delta to divert water, Sierra Club California believes that some basic questions should be fully answered so Californians have all the facts about what's being proposed.

The questions that need to be answered about the proposed project include:

1. How much will the project really cost? We're being told that just the record-size tunnels project costs are estimated to be at least \$12 billion, but this does not include operation and maintenance which ups the cost to \$17 billion. Add in financing and the costs reach \$51 billion according to BDCP documents. Governor Brown estimates the costs at \$14 billion.
2. Who pays for the project? And who pays for the project's impacts? The State of California last week released a "Benefit Analysis of the BDCP" that suggests the project makes economic sense for the South of the Delta water contractors, but only if huge costs are shifted to others and benefits not part of the project are counted. Why has no true statewide cost benefit analysis been prepared or planned for this massive public works project?
3. How much "new" water will be produced annually after the project is completed? What is the source? What are the real export levels and how were they determined?
4. When will this "new" water be available – 2020? 2030? 2050?
5. How will this "new" water be divided between different users and the needs of the environment? How and when will that be determined?
6. What are the upstream impacts of this project on flows, temperatures, fisheries protection and reservoir operations?
7. Scientists report that climate disruption will impact California – its coastline, sea level, weather patterns, precipitation rates and a growing list of other conditions. The current proposed plan indicates climate assumptions will be "forthcoming." How will the proposed project and its operations be adaptable to changes in California's climate?

These fundamental questions need to be fully answered before the State spends another dime on the multi-year, multi-million dollar Bay-Delta Conservation Plan process. Too much is at stake for the Delta for the state and federal agencies to announce a plan that defers important decisions while an expensive and potentially damaging water diversion project is allowed to proceed.